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NEWS RELEASE

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Man Sentenced for Kidnapping, Sexually Assaulting Two Lancaster Teens

A 42-year-old man who kidnapped and sexually assaulted two teenage girls in Lancaster was sentenced today to more than 100 years-to-life in state prison, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

On March 24, Joseph Kenneth Cornett was found guilty of a total of 15 felony counts including kidnapping to commit rape, lewd act upon a child, forcible rape of child victim and assault by means of force likely to produce great bodily injury.

The jury also found true allegations that the crimes were committed against multiple victims and that the victims were children 14 or older.

Case MA065982 was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorneys Jon Hatami and Scott Yang.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Henry Hall also ordered Cornett to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

According to evidence presented at the four-week long trial, Cornett gave a 15-year-old girl a ride in his vehicle on April 13, 2015, but then prevented her from leaving the car. The defendant then drove her to a deserted area of Lancaster and sexually assaulted her twice, the prosecutors said.

Then on May 6, 2015, Cornett approached a second 15-year-old girl who was walking home from school, according to witness testimony. The defendant claimed to be a police officer and stated that he was going to arrest her for jaywalking, the prosecutors added.

Cornett coerced the teen into his car and drove her to an abandoned temporary mobile classroom near Lancaster Boulevard and 40th Street. The defendant then forced the girl into the classroom and sexually assaulted her, according to the evidence presented at trial.

The prosecutors said the victim managed to escape and get help from a group of people at a nearby church. Cornett then attempted to escape but his vehicle became stuck in the sand. During his arrest, the defendant fought the officers attempting to arrest him and spat at them.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

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Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.